

# Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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## Editorial

### Important to Our Sunday Schools

We regret that owing to the delay in the mill filling our order for paper the *Quarterly* will be a week later than usual. It will be in time for use the first Sunday in the new quarter, but the schools farthest distant from this point may not get the *Quarterly* in time for distribution June 30. We hope to be able to fill all orders between June 24 and June 29, and most schools will get the *Quarterly* for distribution June 30, the last Sunday in the quarter. All schools will get them in time for use the first Sunday in the quarter. This announcement is made so that there may be no misunderstanding on the part of our customers. You will get a receipt for your order, and by that you may be assured that your order will be filled.

### Mending the Confession

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian church has voted their confession of faith, known as the Westminster Confession. There were several articles pertaining to election which were obscure, and one in particular which clearly taught, by inference, that non-elect infants, dying in infancy, were lost, the elect only being saved. This tenet had become intolerable to a great majority of the church. For a long time Presbyterian teachers and editors have insisted that the article in question did not admit of such a construction, but it was plain that if it did not, if the article did not teach infant damnation, its language should be so altered as to bring out that fact. As it stands in the Confession, and has stood for three hundred years, there was no escape from the obnoxious construction. There appears to be evidence also that the old Calvinists did not object to this construction. Indeed they regarded it as a logical sequence to the doctrine of election as they understood it. That doctrine taught that from eternity God definitely elected certain persons to be saved, and ordained certain other persons to be lost. Now since he has not explicitly taught in the Scriptures that he only allows *elect* infants to die in infancy, it follows that doubtless many infants who die in infancy were *not* included among the elect, and are therefore lost. This result has however become intolerable to modern Calvinists, and as one of the commissioners in the present Assembly stated several days ago, while he believed in the salvation only of the elect, he wanted it understood that all infants who die in infancy are of the elect, and are therefore saved.

It is remarkable indeed what absurdities intelligent and pious men run into when they set out to make a creed, and with what tenacity these absurdities hold on in the minds of

those who receive them by inheritance and early education. Theologians have read into Paul's language on the subject of election what he never intended, what doubtless he never dreamed, so that what the Apostle wrote to set forth God's providential discrimination between the Jews and the gentiles, the election of the one and the rejection of the other, has been given an individual meaning, bearing upon the question of personal salvation. As a matter of fact, in the course of God's dealing with the world thru the ages, both the Jews and the gentiles have been successfully elected and rejected. First we have the election of Israel and the rejection of the rest of the world, and last we have the election of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews. Paul sets forth certain reasons for this divine plan, a subject which we will not go into any further than to say that it does not involve any of those contradictions which inevitably attend the Calvinistic doctrine of arbitrary election, as applied to personal salvation.

The trouble about creeds was never more vividly illustrated than it has been by this recent discussion over the Westminster Confession. Get an error, a false doctrine, into a creed, let it remain there for a century or two, become venerable with age, become bred-in-the-bone with its votaries, and you had almost as well attempt to remove a mountain as to eliminate that error. It has become a fixture. Tradition and conservatism favor its retention, and resist all efforts at revision. In greater or less degree this is the case in all denominations. The belief of the fathers is handed down to their posterity as a sacred inheritance, and so along with the many or few things in which they were *right*, come the few or many things in which they were *wrong*, and the one is held to as tenaciously as the other. Error is held on to because the fathers believed it, and truth is held on to not so much because it is truth, as because the fathers believed it. Thus it turns out that the conservatism which is an entrenchment of truth is also an entrenchment of error, with most of the net gain, however, on the side of error.

For our part we are willing to let truth take its chances in the open field, with an untrammelled Bible, interpreted by no set formulas, but *by the Spirit of Christ in the church*.

### Duties of the Congregation

We mean the converted part, the church members, and since we have discussed the scolding preacher, let us say to his dilatory people that there is not a single reason under heaven why they should not be heartily ashamed of themselves. Suppose the preacher is not as interesting as he ought to be, or as pious as he ought to be, is that any valid reason why the members of the church should absent themselves from the sanctuary? It is a shame that any well per-